

WELLSPRING

A publication of The Watershed Institute. Keeping central New Jersey's water clean, safe, & healthy since 1949.



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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Heed Van Abs' admonition: We can do better

by Jim Waltman

(and we must demand better)

In accepting the 2023 Edmund W. Stiles Award for Environmental Leadership, Dan Van Abs, professor of professional practice for water, society, and the environment at Rutgers University, repeated a charge that he has made many times during his distinguished career: “We can do better.” We should all take Dan’s urging to heart, and we must also demand better from our public officials. Several recent issues serve as stark examples of the need for stronger leadership.

- Nearly three and a half years ago, Governor Murphy pledged to modify environmental rules to reflect the realities of climate change by January 2022. We applauded his commendable commitment; however, his **administration has missed that deadline by 16 months**. Climate change has already changed precipitation patterns and flood levels in New Jersey and is projected to continue to do so.



A November 2021 report from the Northeast Regional Climate Center revealed that rainfall amounts during the heaviest storms have increased by 15% in some parts of New Jersey since 1999 and will likely increase by 50% in some parts of the state by 2100. Flood levels have risen dramatically and are expected to continue to rise. Despite this knowledge, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) continues to define floodplains and measure the adequacy of stormwater runoff control systems based on data from 1999. In other words, new developments are being approved, even though NJDEP knows they will put their occupants at risk of flooding and threaten downstream communities. This must end.

- **The relentless push for more warehouses** in the state threatens a future of yet more flooding, air pollution, traffic congestion, and diminished open space and wildlife habitats. The proposed 5.5 million square foot

Bridgepoint-8 complex in West Windsor would be the state’s largest warehouse facility, spanning more than 400 acres (about half the area of Central Park in New York City) in an already heavily congested area near Route One. While

township officials already approved zoning changes and the site plan for the enormous project last year, permits from NJDEP are still required for the project to move forward. Earlier this year, The Watershed Institute filed a lawsuit challenging the project under the Flood Hazard Control Act—a law intended to prevent new develop-

ments from causing flooding of downstream neighbors and communities. We must resist projects that jeopardize the well-being of our communities and environment.

- In February, NJDEP’s Division of Fish and Wildlife **intentionally leveled more than 20 acres of mature forest** on the Glassboro Wildlife Management Area, a state-owned preserve in the Pine Barrens. The tragic act, ostensibly to create open land habitat for the American woodcock, was done with virtually no public notice or opportunity for public comment. We must protect—not clear—New Jersey’s declining mature forests and the public should have the right to know what’s being planned on public lands and the right to comment.

To address these pressing issues, we must demand transparency, public participation, and stronger leadership from our officials. It is crucial that public lands are managed responsibly, that development decisions consider the long-term impact on communities and the environment, and that climate change is given the attention and action it requires.

We can and must do better!

NEW ON THE RESERVE

Hickory Loop Boardwalk Is Officially Open

The Watershed Institute officially opened its new Hickory Loop Boardwalk with a ribbon cutting ceremony at its Annual Meeting. The fully accessible raised walkway was funded in part by grants from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Green Acres Stewardship Program and REI Corporation. Named for the Shagbark hickory tree, with its silver-white bark hanging in loose strips, this raised path winds through an oak-hickory forest.



Pat Heany, assistant director of education at the Watershed, leads a group of second graders from Bear Tavern School on an educational walk around the boardwalk.



The Hickory Loop Boardwalk is a fully accessible 0.7-mile raised walkway that winds through forests, meadows and a stream.

Dedicated volunteers care for specific sections of land along the boardwalk through our Adopt-a-Plot program. Their efforts have led to the planting of hundreds of new native trees and shrubs to restore an area of forest devastated by

the invasive emerald ash borer, a metallic green beetle, which has killed almost all of the area's ash trees.

Fences and small plastic tubes protect the young trees from browsing white-tailed deer. A small stream forms along the boardwalk during wet weather and flows into Stony Brook. The entire area has been seeded with native groundcover species to prevent soil erosion. Hickory Loop Boardwalk is an example of accessibility, conservation, and research, benefiting visitors and the environment.

On the Cover:

Opening the new boardwalk, Executive Director Jim Waltman is assisted by Hopewell Township Mayor Michael Rugar (left), Board Chair Barbie Cole (right), and students from Bear Tavern Elementary School.

Shad Return After Dam Removal

On an excursion with members of the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife, Watershed Executive Director Jim Waltman and several other Watershed staff witnessed something extraordinary—American shad and other fish migrating up the Millstone River. Until 2017 the Weston Mill Dam in Manville, four and a half miles downstream, would have made finding migrating fish nearly impossible. It took a decade of investigation and advocacy by The Watershed Institute to get the obsolete dam removed, but the results are a spectacular success story. The Watershed's efforts to restore American shad to the Millstone River are made possible in part by a grant from an anonymous donor.



Now, the only remaining blockage between Raritan Bay and Princeton is the Blackwells Mills Dam, which, if removed, would open another nine miles of Millstone River spawning grounds. In working to have this dam removed, the Watershed has faced obstacles due to disagreements between government agencies. Nevertheless, this success story serves as strong motivation for more action and collaboration between all parties to ensure the restoration of this precious resource.

Environmental Leaders Recognized at 2023 Annual Meeting

The Watershed Institute celebrated its 2023 Annual Meeting Monday, April 24 at the Watershed Center, the organization's LEED-Platinum headquarters on its

who were reelected to a second term are Rob Connor, Ph.D. of Trenton, NJ, Kurt Schulte of Lawrenceville, NJ, and Dr. Susannah Wise of Montgomery Township, NJ.



Watershed Institute Executive Director Jim Waltman welcomes members, trustees, visitors and friends to the Annual Meeting on April 24 at the Watershed Center.

950-acre nature reserve. The meeting featured the election and reelection of Trustees, presentation of awards to two exceptional environmental leaders, and the official opening of the Hickory Loop Boardwalk.

“For more than seven decades, The Watershed Institute has been working to protect and restore clean water and healthy watersheds,” said Jim Waltman, the organization’s executive director. “The annual meeting is a great time to celebrate and thank our staff, members, volunteers, and partners for their commitment to this mission and the many successes that we’ve enjoyed together,” said Waltman. He highlighted the work that The Watershed Institute’s scientists, advocates, and educators are doing to help municipalities manage polluted stormwater runoff to improve water quality.

The Trustees elected this year are Marc Brahaney of Princeton, NJ, Anne Catena Ed.D. of Lawrence Township, NJ, Paula Figueroa-Vega of Lawrence Township, NJ, and Carolyn Powell Sanderson of Pennington, NJ. The Trustees

The event also celebrated the achievements of two exceptional environmental leaders. The Edmund W. Stiles Award for Environmental Leadership was presented to Daniel J. Van Abs, Ph.D., FAICP/PP, professor of professional practice for water, society, and the environment at Rutgers University. The annual award recognizes a community leader who demonstrates outstanding leadership, dedication, and passion in advancing the cause of environmental protection and stewardship. The award is presented in honor of the late Edmund W. (Ted) Stiles, Professor of Ecology at Rutgers University.

Van Abs has spent his career addressing the challenges of water resources management, including water supply, water quality, watershed protection, water infrastructure, and regional environmental planning and management. He served as a Trustee to The Watershed Institute from 1992-1998 and from 2014-2020 and has been a member of the organization’s Advisory Board since 2020. As a professor at Rutgers, he mixes teaching, research, and public service responsibilities.



More than 160 people celebrate the work that the Watershed Institute’s scientists, advocates, and educators are doing to keep our water clean, safe and healthy at the 2023 Annual Meeting.



Tina Overman (center) and Jim Waltman (right) pose with current and former students from Bear Tavern school, who attended to honor their teacher Ms. Overman.



Daniel Van Abs accepts the Edmund W. Stiles Award for Environmental Leadership.

The Richard Rotter Award for Excellence in Environmental Education was presented to Tina Overman, STEM facilitator at Bear Tavern Elementary School in Hopewell Township. This award is given annually to an outstanding local teacher in recognition of their commitment to environmental education.

In her 25 years at Bear Tavern School, Overman has brought many innovative environmental programs to her kindergarten through fifth grade students. She has raised

trout and diamondback terrapins; installed wildlife habitat enhancements; established a nature trail; developed a pollinator meadow and garden; and managed vegetable gardens at the school. In addition, Overman and her students are working with The Watershed Institute as part of the pilot class of our StreamWatch Schools program, in which they contribute to the collection of water quality data from around the watershed.

Welcome New Trustees



Marc Brahaney



Anne Catena Ed.D.

Reelected Trustees



Rob Connor Ph.D.



Kurt Schulte



Paula Figueroa-Vega



Carolyn Powell Sanderson



Dr. Susannah Wise

REMEMBERING A FRIEND

Susie Travers

The Watershed Institute lost long-time friend and dedicated supporter, Susan “Susie” Travers in October 2022 at the age of 80. Susie was a master gardener who loved spending time in nature, and especially loved her visits to the Watershed Reserve and Kate Gorrie Butterfly House.



Susie Travers leaves a legacy of love for nature to her family and a generous gift to the Watershed.

to pass on his love for nature and the outdoors,” said Kim. Kim’s daughter Mary has fond memories of constructing nature fairy houses in the garden with her grandmother.

“Nobody was ever more fun to be with on an excursion or a woodsy path. She found the miraculous everywhere and brought her awareness to our attention in the most endearing way.” recalled her sister Lynn Sanford.

Susie raised her family with a love of the outdoors and her children and grandchildren have fond memories of time spent in the Watershed summer programs.

Susie’s daughter Kim Hansen credits this influence on her son Tim’s decision to earn a degree in outdoor leadership from Ithaca College. “Now Tim, who is also an Eagle Scout, is a program coordinator for Outward Bound and is continuing

Susie’s son Ben Travers recalled, “Her love for nature and wildlife was second to none and it brought so much joy and happiness to all of us.” Susie enjoyed taking her grandchildren, Alexis, Lily and Chris on hikes in Marin County, California and on beach vacations along the beautiful coastline.

“We are grateful to Susie for all her contributions and for choosing The Watershed Institute to be the beneficiary of a generous portion of her estate,” said Jim Waltman, the Watershed’s executive director.

Susie and her family celebrated her 80th birthday on a beautiful day at the Watershed Kate Gorrie Butterfly House surrounded by all that she loved.

Muriel Gardiner Buttinger Legacy Society

The Watershed Institute’s Muriel Gardiner Buttinger Legacy Society recognizes those individuals, both living and deceased, who have chosen to name the Watershed as a beneficiary in their estate plans. Legacy gifts of all sizes support our work to keep water clean, safe, and healthy. Gifts can be directed towards our endowment, restricted to a specific purpose, or made without restriction. We hope as you think about your legacy, you will consider naming The Watershed Institute in your will as part of your planned giving.

If you would like to receive a copy of our Planned Giving Brochure about the different ways to make a planned gift, please contact Development Director Jenny Kershner at 609-737-3735, ext 36 or jkershner@thewatershed.org. If you have already designated The Watershed Institute as a beneficiary of your planned giving, please let us know so that we can thank you and include you as a member of our Legacy Society.

Legacy Society

Mary Jane Augustine
Evelyne A. Axelrod*
Connie and Bill Bauder
Barbara Baumecker
Beth Behrend
Barbara and Edward Bromley
Howard Russell Butler Jr.*
Jane L. Buttars
Helen Cannon
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Robert Tomaselli and
Michael Dawson
Susan Travers*
Jim Waltman
Sally Wells
Anne Pacsu Wieland
Van Williams
Helen M. Woodruff*
L. Brewster Young *
*deceased

Save the Date



The final touches are going on the Kate Gorrie Butterfly House preparing it for summer visitors.

Keeping water clean, safe, and healthy is the heart of our mission.

We work to protect and restore our water and natural environment in central New Jersey through conservation, advocacy, science, and education.

Visit us online to show your support. Stay informed, get involved, donate.

**The Watershed Institute • 31 Titus Mill Rd, Pennington, NJ 08534
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A blue rectangular poster for the Annual Butterfly Festival. The text is white and bold. The word "BUTTERFLY" is on the top line, and "FESTIVAL" is on the bottom line, both in a very large, rounded font. The word "Festival" is split across two lines. The date "Saturday August 5" is centered below the main title. At the bottom, there is a line of text describing the event and a website URL. Several monarch butterflies are scattered around the text.

Come Celebrate the Annual

BUTTERFLY FESTIVAL

Saturday August 5

**Tour the butterfly house, enjoy food, games,
the insect zoo, and much more!**

Learn more at thewatershed.org/butterfly-festival